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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MADRID 000911

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FROM THE AMBASSADOR FOR OSD/P DASD DAN FATA

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR US-SPAIN HIGH LEVEL DEFENSE TALKS

Classified By: Ambassador Eduardo Aguirre for reasons 1.4 b & d.

¶1. (C/NF) Dan, welcome back to Spain. I appreciate your patience and efforts to finally resolve the NCIS/OSI issue and I'm glad that you've made this High-Level Defense Committee (HLDC) meeting a priority. Now that the Permanent Committee is back on track, handling routine issues at the staff level, we can use the HLDC forum to share views and set strategic direction on key international policy issues like Afghanistan, Kosovo, the Couso case, missile defense, the NATO Summit in 2008, and future US use of Moron and Rota military bases. As we've discussed before, Spain can at times be a difficult partner, but never more so than when it feels ignored. This meeting, along with Secretary Rice's visit in a few weeks, should reassure the GOS that we take it seriously, but while reminding MOD that we have high expectations of such important partners.

-- US USE OF SPANISH BASES --

¶2. (C/NF) The DCM, the Embassy's political-military team, and I travel regularly to Rota and Moron, the Spanish bases where nearly 3000 US troops and dependents live and work. With each successive visit, I am more impressed by the important activities and outstanding working-level cooperation at the bases. The Czech Deputy Prime Minister, planning for the possibility of US missile defense installations in his country, recently visited Rota in order to understand how the US military behaves as a tenant. Perhaps on your next trip you'll be able to travel to southern Spain to get a better idea of the key role that the bases play in US efforts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other operations. As you know, it is taking MOD longer than we expected to implement its new interagency process for reviewing proposed Naval Criminal Investigative Service and USAF Office of Special Investigations activities. We continue to press them to speed the process so that we can begin to implement the agreement and our investigators can get back to work.

-- AFGHANISTAN --

¶3. (C/NF) Despite the limitations imposed by Spanish domestic politics, which are foremost in every minister's mind, due to nationwide local/regional elections in two weeks and national elections within the year, Spain remains a stalwart ally in Afghanistan. Though not currently in a position to increase the 690-soldier troop ceiling that Parliament set, the GOS insists that it is committed to maintain current levels for the long haul. Your primary interlocutor, MOD Secretary General for Policy Luis Cuesta, recently spent a week in Kabul and Herat with his counterpart from MFA. They both returned relatively optimistic that NATO-ISAF is making progress but understanding more clearly than ever that NATO

won't be able to leave anytime soon. Top MOD leaders have also told us privately that CHOD General Sanz has initiated discussions in Brussels regarding the possibility that Spain would staff the core of the ISAF HQ in summer 2008, after Spanish elections. We continue to press the GOS to increase its public diplomacy efforts, and to consider doing more when it is able.

¶4. (C/NF) While the GOS has lately complained about the lack of coordination between ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom -- specifically the airstrikes in Herat province that killed civilians as well as Taliban -- Spain remains active on the security and reconstruction fronts. The Spanish Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is well regarded for involving local Afghans in its efforts to provide basic services and critical infrastructure to the people of Badghis province, but MFA officials note that there is no sign of the central government or national security forces in the province. While carefully complying with its caveat, Spanish troops supported NATO-ISAF's Operation Achilles earlier this spring by sealing the southern border of their zone. Regarding its Sevilla Ministerial commitments, MOD sources say that two Spanish military training teams (OMLTs) will arrive in Afghanistan in early June to begin training Afghan National Army troops. They have told us that these 30-50 soldiers will be in addition to the 690 troops that are already deployed. The Spanish Army is also proceeding with its purchase of tactical UAVs, and expects to have them in the field later this year.

-- KOSOVO --

¶5. (C/NF) In the Balkans, where its troops have served for more than 15 years, Spain has shown its ability to maintain troops for the long-term. Right now, however, we need keep

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making our case to keep troops in Kosovo. For domestic political reasons and fear of provoking Russia, Spain is ambivalent about the current direction of Kosovo policy. So long as there is a UN resolution authorizing the Ahtissari plan, Spain will maintain its troops in KFOR. If the UN fails to agree on a new resolution, Spain has said that it would have to seriously consider pulling its troops out, but has emphasized that it would do this only in extremis and only in careful consultation with allies. We need to keep the pressure on, reminding Spain that NATO has a critical role and that we can't let the Russians drive a wedge between the US and Europe on issues like this.

-- MISSILE DEFENSE --

¶6. (C/NF) Though initially tentative about the US missile defense (MD) plan, Spain listened carefully to the Missile Defense Agency Deputy Director BG O'Reilly's presentation in March, asked some tough questions, and has taken the position that so long as the US attends to Russian and is willing to discuss the issue in NATO, it won't stand in the way. MOD said that it will soon announce support for the development of a NATO study on the issue. MOD has asked to see a simulation of how well the proposed MD system would cover Spain, though it says that it doesn't currently see a particular threat from Iran and is willing to support the US's plan primarily as a show of solidarity among allies. While we need to continue to inform and engage MOD on this issue, we don't see Spain causing problems on missile defense.

-- NATO --

¶7. (C/NF) On 2008 NATO Summit issues of enlargement and partnership, Spain believes that NATO should keep an open door to European applicants who can qualify. MOD says that the Balkans should be treated as a single unit, despite their different stages of development, because it will be important to future Balkans stability to eventually get them all around the NATO table. Regarding Ukraine and Georgia, Spain is not opposed to the idea that they would eventually join NATO, but

says that the best thing at the moment is to wait and see what direction they choose to go. Spain is a big fan of NATO partnerships, especially the Mediterranean Dialogue, which it believes should be strengthened for the sake of fighting terrorism in North Africa and supporting the current governments and militaries against extremists. MOD says that the Med Dialogue countries know that they aren't going to someday join NATO, but that they should be invited to observe exercises, included in training, and given other opportunities to deepen ties and cooperate with NATO.

-- CRITICAL SIDEBAR ISSUES --

18. (C/NF) A couple of other key issues will be in the air, if not actually on the agenda. For our side, it will be important to continue to raise the Couso case, in which three US servicemen face charges related to the 2003 death of Spanish cameraman Jose Couso during the battle for Baghdad. XXXXXXXXXXXX. I raised this issue with Vice President de la Vega on April 30. She was supportive but uncertain that direct GOS involvement would be productive. DCM spoke late last week with the Deputy Justice Minister, and we continue to prod the GOS to appeal. We were informed Monday morning that the Chief Prosecutor of Spain's National Court has indeed filed an appeal, which will go to the same court which originally dismissed the case (in 2006) on procedural grounds. The Deputy DIGENPOL in MOD told the Embassy last week that MOD completely supports the US position, and said that he would raise with his superiors the possibility of making a statement to the court or otherwise demonstrating support. The Deputy Justice Minister also said the GOS strongly opposes a case brought against former Secretary Rumsfeld and will work to get it dismissed. The

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judge involved in that case has told us he has already started the process of dismissing the case.

19. (C/NF) An issue that MOD may raise with you is their perception of "imbalance" in the defense industrial relationship. The HLDC is not the most appropriate forum for a discussion of this issue, especially since Al Volkman, Director of International Cooperation for acquisitions, will be in Madrid at the same time as you precisely for the long-scheduled 17th US-Spain Defense Industrial Cooperation Committee meeting and the 4th US-Spain Declaration of

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Principles meeting. Nonetheless, Spanish Defense Ministry officials have seen you with Secretary Gates, and may raise the issue with you in hopes of getting it top-level attention. Defense Minister Alonso has raised the issue in public speeches and his people have raised it in meetings. They point to Spanish purchases like 24 Tomahawk missiles and US AEGIS combat systems for its F-100 frigates and S-80 subs, which the GOS made over the protests of European allies like France and Germany, and say that while MOD plans to continue a strong relationship with the US defense industry and knows that it is getting the best when it buys US, it would appreciate a "gesture" from the US so that it can show domestic audiences that Spain gets something out of the relationship. While we continue to push Spain to buy into the Joint Strike Fighter program, we know that Spain is very anxious to learn whether Spanish company EADS-CASA will get the Joint Cargo Aircraft contract. We try to remind MOD that while there may be a dollar imbalance in the defense relationship, Spain benefits from the relationship in other ways, not only getting the best technology for its military, but also being able to sell products that include US technology to third countries.

10. (C/NF) We want to use the HLDC to further strengthen the Permanent Committee and are pleased that EUCOM will propose the joint working group as a means to increase EUCOM involvement on Spanish military issues. Direct and ongoing communication between MOD and EUCOM at the staff level can

only help us to avoid minor problems that have the potential  
to escalate, like NCIS/OSI.  
Aguirre